What is claimed is:

1   1. A work-management method comprising:

2   determining a probability of availability at a future point in time

3 of each of a plurality of resources;

4   combining the probabilities to obtain a number; and

5   using the number to schedule new tasks for the resources for

6 the future point in time.

1   2. The method of claim 1 wherein:

2   using comprises

3   scheduling for the future point in time no more than the number

4 of the new tasks to become available for servicing by the plurality of the

5 resources.

1   3. The method of claim 1 wherein:

2   combining comprises

3   summing the probabilities to obtain the number.

1   4. The method of claim 1 wherein

2   determining comprises

3   for each of the resources, determining an amount of time t that

4 the resource has been servicing a task by now;

5   for each of the resources, determining a probability $F(t+h)$ of

6 the resource servicing its task to completion within a total amount of time

7 $t+h$;

8   for each of the resources, determining a probability $F(t)$ of the

9 resource completing servicing its task by now; and

10   for each of the resources, determining a probability P that the

11 resource will complete servicing its task at the future point in time an

12 amount of time h from now as $\dfrac{F(t+h)-F(t)}{1-F(t)}$.

1   5. The method of claim 1 in a call center wherein:

2   tasks comprise calls; and

3   scheduling comprises

4   in response to P, determining whether or not to initiate or

5 cancel an outbound call.

1   6. A work-management method comprising:

2   determining an amount of time t that a resource has been

3 servicing a task by now;

4   determining a probability $F(t+h)$ of the resource servicing the

5 task to completion within a total amount of time $t+h$;

6   determining a probability $F(t)$ of the resource completing

7 servicing the task by now;

8   determining a probability P that the resource will complete

9 servicing the task within an amount of time h from now as $\dfrac{F(t+h)-F(t)}{1-F(t)}$;

10 and

11   in response to P, scheduling another task for servicing.

1   7. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   scheduling comprises

3   in response to P, determining whether or not to initiate said

4 another task.

1   8. The method of claim 6 in a call center wherein:

2   tasks comprise calls; and

3   scheduling comprises

4   in response to P, determining whether or not to initiate an

5   outbound call.

1   9. The method of claim 6 further comprising:

2   performing the determining steps for a plurality of resources,

3   and

4   determining a number of the resources that will likely have

5   completed servicing their respective tasks within the amount of time h

6   from now as a sum of the probabilities *P* determined for individual ones of

7   the plurality of resources; wherein

8   scheduling comprises

9   in response to determining the number of the resources,

10   scheduling new tasks for servicing.

1   10. The method of claim 9 wherein:

2   scheduling tasks for servicing comprises scheduling no more

3   than the number of the tasks for servicing.

1   11. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   determining a probability $F(t+h)$ comprises

3   obtaining historical task-completion statistics, and

4   from the obtained statistics determining the probability $F(t+h)$;

5   and

6   determining a probability $F(t)$ comprises

7   from the obtained statistics determining the probability $F(t)$.

1   12. The method of claim 11 wherein:

2   obtaining historical task-completion statistics comprises

3   obtaining a mean and a variance of time historically spent by

4   resources on servicing tasks to completion.

1   13. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   determining a probability $F(t+h)$ comprises

3   obtaining historical task-completion statistics,

4   fitting the task-completion statistics into a lifetime closed-form

5   cumulative-probability distribution to determine parameters of the

6   distribution, and

7   evaluating the distribution with the determined parameters and

8   the total amount of time $t+h$ to obtain $F(t+h)$; and

9   determining a probability $F(t)$ comprises

10   evaluating the distribution with the determined parameters and

11   the amount of time t to obtain $F(t)$.

1   14. The method of claim 13 wherein:

2   obtaining historical task-completion statistics comprises

3   obtaining a mean and a variance of time historically spent by

4   resources on servicing tasks to completion;

5   the cumulative-probability distribution F comprises a Weibull

6   distribution; and

7   the parameters comprise a dispersion parameter and a

8   parameter of central tendency.

1   15. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   determining an amount of time t comprises

3   determining the amount of time t that the resource has been

4   servicing a task of one of a plurality of different types of tasks; and

5   determining historical task-completion statistics comprises

6   determining the historical task-completion statistics for the one

7   type of tasks.

1   16. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   scheduling another task comprises

3   in response to *P* initiating preparation of a task that may require

4 servicing by an agent at a later time.

1   17. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   determining a probability $F(t+h)$ comprises

3   obtaining a historical histogram for task completion, and

4   evaluating a cumulative said probability with the obtained

5 histogram for the total amount of time $t+h$ to obtain $F(t+h)$; and

6   determining a probability $F(t)$ comprises

7   evaluating the cumulative probability with the obtained

8 histogram for the amount of time t to obtain $F(t)$.

1   18. The method of claim 6 wherein:

2   scheduling comprises

3   in response to *P*, canceling preparation of a task that could

4 require servicing by a resource.

1   19. An apparatus that effects the method of one of claims 1-18.

1   20. A computer-readable medium containing instructions

2 which, when executed in a computer, cause the computer to perform the

3 method of one of claims 1-18.

1   21. A work-management apparatus comprising:

2   means for determining a probability of availability at a future

3 point in time of each of a plurality of resources;

4   means cooperative with the determining means for combining

5 the probabilities to obtain a number; and

6   means cooperative with the combining means for scheduling

7 for the future point in time no more than the number of new tasks for

8 servicing by the plurality of the resources.

1   22. A work-management apparatus comprising:

2   means for determining an amount of time t that a resource has

3   been servicing a task by now;

4   means cooperative with the time-determining means for

5   determining a probability $F(t+h)$ of the resource servicing the task to

6   completion within a total amount of time $t+h$;

7   means cooperative with the time-determining means for

8   determining a probability $F(t)$ of the resource completing servicing the task

9   by now;

10   means cooperative with both of the probability-determining

11   means for determining a probability P that the resource will complete

12   servicing the task within an amount of time h from now as $\dfrac{F(t+h)-F(t)}{1-F(t)}$;

13   and

14   means cooperative with the P-determining means and

15   responsive to P for scheduling another task for servicing.